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THE COMMUNITY PROGRAM OF GREATER LOS ANGELES

By

JOHN J. HAMILTON

*Member of the Board of Supervisors of
Los Angeles County*

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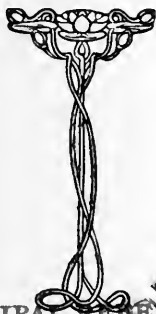
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The
Community Program
of
Greater Los Angeles



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INTRODUCTORY



John J. Hamilton's active life as editor, publisher, author, publicist and citizen has been excellent preparation for his work as a member of the Los Angeles County board of supervisors and for leadership in the development of Greater Los Angeles.

That the one man who has most deeply and thoroughly studied the civic life of this community—its city, county and school activities—should now make public the plan on which he is working, and the foundation principles by which he is guided, is a matter for general congratulation.

Mr. Hamilton maintains that community plans are evolved out of the local life, not made by politicians. The community program presented by him in this booklet is therefore what he conceives to be the plan that the people of Los Angeles County—Greater Los Angeles—have themselves originated, under the guidance of popular instincts truer and more reliable than the leadership of any individual or group of individuals.

Taking as his end and aim the development of Los Angeles County as an industrial center, with gainful employment for every worker and profitable business for every man and woman seeking openings therefor; and coupling with this the actual record of the city and county's strivings for good government, civic betterment, good roads, harbor and marine facilities, flood control, conservation of forests, land and water, and educational opportunities, Supervisor Hamilton has reached the conclusion that Greater Los Angeles does not need a new civic program; that it already has a community program which, when worked out, will

make this county the best place in the world to live, work and play.

That this program will be made good while men and women now in middle life are still living, Mr. Hamilton is assured by the results of his thorough and painstaking investigations. He sets forth his reasons for this belief in the following pages. Like every utterance of this faithful official and good citizen, they are worthy a thoughtful perusal.

JAMES S. LEONARD.



The COMMUNITY PROGRAM of GREATER LOS ANGELES



As secretary of the Los Angeles charter revision commission in 1912, as a member of the Pasadena board of education in 1914, and as a member of the Los Angeles County board of supervisors during 1915 and 1916, it has been my good fortune to have broader opportunities than most citizens enjoy for looking thoroughly, with official authority, into the three principal divisions of local public life—municipal, school and county government. I have made extended surveys of all three.

These surveys have convinced me that the people of Los Angeles County and its thirty-seven cities and thirty-five unincorporated towns are working out a program that is their own, independently of anybody's leadership; a program clearly defined in most of its features and unmistakably indicated by local history in even the most obscure of its aims and objects. This program is a decalogue of grand civic determinations, all of which I believe will be realized during the lifetime of men and women now in middle age, and is as follows:

The Ten Principal Aims and Objects of the People of Greater Los Angeles—The Community Program

1. Efficient local government, thoroughly co-ordinated, firmly held under public control, based solidly on the merit system, and extended to all properly public activities, insuring a rich and satisfying community life for all, at a minimum cost.

2. The best schools in the world, economically and democratically managed.

3. The saloon, brothel and gambling den abolished in all our cities and the county, whether prohibited by the state or not, but preferably with California dry.

4. The health of the people of the county and all its cities fully safeguarded.

5. The aged, sick, defective, helpless and unfortunate generously cared for through a system of scientific charities.

6. Justice placed within the reach of all, without the law's proverbial delays.

7. The good roads system completed, including mountain and canyon roads, and better local roads everywhere.

8. Conservation of our harbors, forests, watersheds and ranch lands by an adequate system of flood and fire prevention and control, including reforestation.

9. Publicly owned and operated transportation facilities both between our cities and local harbors and at sea, through the Panama Canal and to the Orient.

10. Public ownership and operation of plants for securing cheap water, power, fuel and light for industrial and domestic use.

Why a Look into Both Past and Future is Just Now Needful

After a period of perhaps the most wonderful growth ever experienced by a city, Greater Los Angeles finds itself under troubled but slowly clearing skies. Building operations in this city and county amounted in the two years of 1912 and 1913 to \$100,000,000—and then came two disastrous floods which together destroyed probably \$15,000,000 worth of land and other property; a frost that was not less disastrous; the collapse of a speculative real estate corporation in which eighteen thousand citizens were stock-

holders and their losses heavier and deadlier than those caused by the frost and the two floods combined; the stoppage of the Panama Canal for many months, and a world war which crushed industry and paralyzed finance and commerce everywhere.

The reaction has been severe. Speculation in real estate—seriously called our “principal industry” by a prominent man in a recent address—has ceased and refused, under all sorts of stimuli, to come to life. Discouragement and pessimism have in many quarters taken the place of excessive optimism and feverish over-confidence. A bond issue for good roads and several issues for schools and local improvements have been defeated. It is freely predicted that a vitally important bond issue for harbor protection, land and water conservation and flood control will not receive approval at the polls. The remark is often heard that no bond issue of any kind can be carried in the present temper of the people, which means that the people will refuse capital, at low rates of interest, to develop their own resources. Investors in real estate are finding it impossible to dispose of their holdings, and difficult to rent offices, store-rooms, residences and other buildings or to collect rentals from the diminished number of their tenants. There was much unemployment a year ago; there is less but still much this year. Many property holders are borrowing money to pay interest and taxes and keep their business going.

And yet the wonder is that the people are in as good spirits as they are. Owners cling to their real estate, refusing to recognize lower levels of values. Building permits in Los Angeles are running over \$1,200,000 a month, and in the county (all cities and rural districts included) more than \$20,000,000 a year. There is, deep under the surface, an unshak-

able faith in the future of Greater Los Angeles, or Los Angeles County.

It is to turn the attention of the thoughtful people of Los Angeles County to the solid ground for this faith and confidence that this booklet is written. I believe that when the men and women of this wonderful metropolitan district take stock of its advantages; when they perceive how grandly their community is planning; when they realize how surely this county, its thirty-seven incorporated cities, its thirty-five unincorporated towns and villages, and its unrivaled rural districts are moving forward toward a condition promising work and wages for every worker and prosperous business for all desiring to engage therein, prosperity sounder than that of 1912 will return, on more than the 1912 scale.

Our Fundamental Trouble is Lack of Employment and Business Openings Outside of Real Estate Speculation

Before entering upon official life in the city and county five years ago, I was called upon, in the interest of a large local enterprise, to do some professional work which enabled me to make a study of social and economic conditions in what may properly now be termed Greater Los Angeles.

Selecting half a dozen typical neighborhoods in Los Angeles, and a score of them in Long Beach, Redondo, Santa Monica, Venice, Hollywood, Glendale, Pasadena, Monrovia and Whittier, I visited four hundred homes and questioned men and women to that number in a manner which brought out their views as to opportunities for work and business in Southern California.

I found in the residence districts of all these places, as I have since found in many others, a remarkable wealth of human resources and everywhere heart-breaking lack of opportunities for employing the people's talents and energies and—outside of real estate—investing their money.

On the porches of modest bungalows and alike on the broad verandahs of stately palaces, the social surveyor finds here everywhere, in retirement, the successful merchants, manufacturers, railway men, professional men and farmers of every part of the country. Get them to talking and you presently learn that these modest citizens have been governors, senators, judges, members of their respective state legislatures, college professors, authors, publishers, physicians, railway managers, merchants, manufacturers, owners of steamship lines, artists, men of science, social leaders—attracted hither by California's sunshine, flowers, fruits, vegetables and outdoor life, or lured to this climate by the promise of restoration of health.

But everywhere, in the homes of rich and poor alike, is the pathetic cry for work—for something useful and profitable to do.

Half of the people of Los Angeles County do not have to work for a livelihood. Hundreds of thousands of them have incomes amounting to a competency. Every great industry in the United States—every profitable mine, railroad, bank and factory, every flourishing agricultural section—is earning money to be spent in Southern California. But these successful people, retired from active business in the east and middle west, are not happy if their sons and daughters are loafers, joy-riders and parasites on the community. They are as anxious to find work as the poorest. Opening a real estate office, with desk, chairs,

a telephone and a stenographer, does not satisfy the craving of a normal American for something to do.

The children of these well-to-do people, as they come of age, are in the labor market, competing with the sons and daughters of the poor for jobs that will not go round.

Eighteen months' service on the board of supervisors has deepened the conviction I reached five years ago—that the fundamental need of Greater Los Angeles is employment for workers and legitimate industrial and commercial openings outside of real estate for men and women of means. Dealing as a supervisor with the problem of unemployment and as a member of the board of equalization with the distressed taxpayer, I am ready to declare that nothing short of the complete and early development of the material, intellectual and moral resources of Los Angeles County, in accordance with the program the people have themselves initiated and carried far toward completion, will set us right.

This County the Framework of One of the World's Great Cities or Metropolitan Districts

In the first address I ever made before the Los Angeles City Club—it was at the Westminster Hotel, in 1911—I maintained that the county was the true unit of local development here; that the good roads system was the future street plan of a great city, and that the interurban lines were to mature into its rapid transit or street car system. I still believe this.

Los Angeles County is really a city, a metropolitan district like that of Boston or Greater New York, only as yet more loosely built and knit together. The county charter adopted in 1912 is really a city charter of the modern commission type. It is susceptible

of being easily modified, without charter amendment, into the approved manager type. Making the auditor controller and county manager is clearly within the scope of the supervisors' powers. It is my ambition to have a part, along with my colleagues of the board, in realizing the immense possibilities of the charter in this direction.

I want to see the board of supervisors meeting every other day—say on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays—as a legislative body for this great metropolitan district, rapidly disposing of three calendars a week instead of one, its orders and notifications going into effect without delay or red tape.

On two of the other days—perhaps Thursday and Saturday—I hope to see the supervisors sitting as an administrative body, as the executive committee of this great two billion dollar corporation; receiving, verifying and checking over the reports of the auditor and controller, visiting the county institutions, conferring with the many heads of departments regarding their plans of work, their efforts to improve service, to develop team work inside of their departments and in cooperating with other departments, encouraging and rewarding suggestions of economies that will reduce taxation.

On the sixth day of the week I would have the supervisors out among their constituents, feeling the pulse of the people and studying their needs and wishes on the ground. These trips could be made singly or as a body, according to the needs of administration.

I would have a scientific budget, not hurriedly thrown together in midsummer, but in process of preparation throughout the year. When roughly completed it would be printed and widely circulated for citizen criticism and suggestions of both cuts and additions.

I would have the supervisors as a representative

body, both legislative and administrative, serving as a bond of union among all the cities and school districts of Greater Los Angeles, cooperating with each in making economical purchases and introducing the best methods of accounting, preparing reports and administering their affairs.

I would have the supervisors and the city councils and school boards working, together with the women's clubs, parent-teachers' associations, improvement associations, chambers of commerce and other civic organizations, to carry out the essential proposals in the community program; the people in their civic centers and at the polls all the while adding to, subtracting from or modifying that program, and looking many years into the future to plan ahead their activities.

Consolidation Under the County Charter vs. County Dismemberment

We already have, in the county charter, the basis for genuine city and county consolidation, without dismembering Greater Los Angeles into three expensively managed counties and thereby tripling the administrative burdens of courts, charities and highways.

There is need for clear thinking on this subject of city and county consolidation. It is fallacious to argue that by consolidating neighboring territory and setting up a combined city and county government after the San Francisco pattern, driving great tributary sections into outside county organizations, Los Angeles can reduce her tax burdens or restore the prosperity her people so earnestly desire. The city is spending 95 cents on the \$100 for its schools, \$1.45 on the \$100 for municipal purposes and 52 cents on the

\$100 for county purposes, the last named including courts, charities, roads and many other functions. County consolidation would not reduce the 95 cents for schools or the \$1.45 for city purposes. The only question would be whether the combined government could carry on the superior courts, the county hospital, the county farm, the outdoor relief, the local portion of the support of state institutions and the score of other county functions for less than 52 cents on the \$100. Efficiency will reduce all three—city, county and school expenses—and duplications in the offices of assessor, tax collector, justices of the peace, sheriff, chief of police, constabulary, etc., must be eliminated, but city and county consolidation on a basis of setting up three counties instead of one would increase, not diminish, taxation.

Los Angeles is as vitally related to the other cities and towns of the county as if they were within its own corporate limits. They are its suburbs. Its citizens have property in all of them. Many of their citizens own Los Angeles property. Many more sleep in outside towns and work in Los Angeles. To take a concrete example of their mutual relations, **the business done in Long Beach, the development of Long Beach Harbor, and the success of Long Beach factories are as beneficial to Los Angeles as if they were situated and paid taxes in Los Angeles.** The sole difference is that the taxes they pay are expended for their benefit through the Long Beach City Hall instead of the Los Angeles City Hall. There is no payment of tribute either way.

Los Angeles now proposes to retail its electric current to other municipalities. It could just as well afford to sell them Owens river water at a price that would pay cost of operation and interest and principal of the bonds. It would be no violation of the spirit of the agreement with the federal government.

The essential fact is that all the cities and rural districts of the county, connected as they are by the boulevard and interurban systems, are one community, with identical interests. The chartered county of Los Angeles is the sufficient but necessary bond holding them together. It is the future city, and the various municipalities, handling their local affairs, are the future boroughs of that city. The true line of development is by transferring city functions, one by one, from all the cities to the county, until all duplications are wiped out and city and county consolidation is accomplished on a sound basis.

To effect this, however, boss rule, red tape, graft, waste and incompetency must cease at the Hall of Records. Neither city nor county can now be implicitly trusted with the vast interests of a consolidated community. It remains for the board of supervisors to demonstrate, by efficient administration, that it is better to hold Los Angeles County—America's most productive county—together as one splendid community, rather than to dismember it. Certainly if the Antelope, San Fernando and San Gabriel valleys were in other counties and knocking at our doors for admission into Los Angeles County they would be welcomed with open arms.

Carrying Out the Community Program Will Insure Employment and Business for All

There is no doubt whatever about the continued growth of Greater Los Angeles in population. If the Los Angeles of the past, with its water largely wasted, with earthen roads enveloping homes, residences and business places in clouds of dust, could attract half a million people, a more populous America will send millions and yet more millions to our present paradise

of good roads, sunshine, verdure, fruits and flowers. The entire Pacific Coast, from San Diego to Alaska, and the vast Rocky Mountain region, not to mention Mexico, will presently teem with millions of people to feed, clothe, educate, house, entertain and supply with all the infinitely varied appliances of civilization.

If the community which grappled with the titanic enterprise of the Owens river aqueduct, and thereby discovered itself, proceeds to reduce taxation by distributing the aqueduct water on a businesslike basis; to develop and distribute the electrical energy which it owns; to perfect its harbors, and, by truck highways and a publicly owned and operated municipal railway, to make those harbors available for all the population centers of the county as they grow together into one great city; if by timely bond issues it boldly accepts the world's offers of abundant capital to complete its road system, to protect its mountain forests and watersheds, to conserve and distribute vast stores of mountain water now wasted and worse than wasted, and to control forever the floods which now threaten to destroy our cities, our lands and our whole basis of investment and prosperity, what will follow?

The certain result will be that conditions will be created in the thirty-seven cities, thirty-five towns and villages, and all the rural districts of Los Angeles County that will be more favorable to manufacturing industries and will constitute a combination of more favoring elements than can be found anywhere else on the globe.

Manufacturers Cannot Stay Away When the Community Program of Greater Los Angeles is Carried Out

Water transportation alone has made many a city,

like Cleveland for example, a manufacturing center.

Extensive transportation facilities have turned the scale in favor of many a city, like Indianapolis, in competing for industries.

Cheap raw materials are everywhere recognized as of tremendous importance in securing the location of manufacturing industries, as at Birmingham, Alabama.

Cheap water, fuel and power always count in determining the location of branch factories, or the removal of main concerns, as in the cities of the Indiana natural gas belt.

Accessibility to the world's markets is a magnet of prime importance in drawing factories to a city, as in the New England cities.

Favorable climatic conditions are manifestly an inducement to the manufacturer seeking a location.

A population of trained intelligence, eager for employment, constitutes an immense manufacturing advantage.

A low rate of taxation, guaranteed by good local government, cannot fail to appeal to the manufacturer and investor in industrial stocks.

Immunity from floods and conditions of settled safety for the investor in lands and manufacturing sites, insuring the well-being of the community and all its workers, will prove very attractive.

Moral conditions insuring sobriety, thrift, health and a high average of comfort among the people are powerful incentives in determining an industrial location.

Carry out the program on which this community has made a start—good government, good schools, good morals, good sanitation, good charitable agencies, practical justice, good roads, conservation of our forests, water and land, adequate flood control, modern harbors with rail and truck facilities to reach

them, a publicly owned merchant marine, cheap raw materials, here or brought here by water, cheap power, cheap fuel, cheap light, and the world market that all these things, with the Panama Canal, certainly mean—and machine guns could not keep manufacturers away. Neither could all the obstructive or competitive forces of the twentieth century prevent the factories already here from expanding in unbounded prosperity.

What the Pennsylvania Railroad Would Do if It Owned Los Angeles County

Not long ago a Los Angeles Sunday newspaper published an article intended to stimulate local pride and ambition, telling what the Germans would do if they owned Los Angeles.

What the Germans have done at Duesseldorf; what the people of France have done at Paris, and what the people of Great Britain have done at Manchester—in short, what all the efficient modern nations have done in their cities—demonstrates clearly enough what they would do if they owned this most favored region on earth. They would borrow capital on bond issues and at once develop all its mineral, land and water resources and protect them from destruction by floods. They would reap gains in production by these improvements sufficient to pay both interest and principal without increased taxation.

But a more pertinent question for this community is what the Pennsylvania Railroad would do with Los Angeles County if it owned it.

We hear much about running public business just as a successfully conducted private institution or corporation is managed. I believe in doing that with Los Angeles City and County.

The Pennsylvania Railroad has had immense opportunities, and has splendidly risen to them all, but it has never had such an opportunity as that which lies open to the people of Greater Los Angeles.

The Pennsylvania Railroad, not nearly as rich or free from debt as is Los Angeles County, has an authorized capital stock of \$600,000,000, of which \$499,203,600 is outstanding. Its own funded debt is \$234,701,000; that of acquired properties it is responsible for is \$56,569,100; guaranteed stock trust certificates amount to \$14,121,000; equipment trust obligations to \$19,950,224, and real estate mortgages and ground rents to \$2,340,816—its total borrowed capital therefore being \$327,682,140. Although the Pennsylvania Railroad, with less than one-third the wealth of Los Angeles County—\$2,000,000,000—is in debt for and paying interest on \$327,682,140 (ten times Los Angeles' aqueduct indebtedness), it never turns down an opportunity to secure capital by bond issues to acquire new properties and develop old ones.

If the Pennsylvania Railroad owned the Los Angeles Harbor, it would have a line of steamers to the Orient and another via the Panama Canal to New York City within twelve months. Edward H. Harri-man, James J. Hill or any of the empire builders of the past would have been quick to grasp such an opportunity.

The Pennsylvania Railroad, like any other private corporation, would undertake these enterprises for financial gain. The civic corporation would have the further incentive of contributing to social welfare.

Los Angeles County can secure capital at $4\frac{1}{2}$ per cent or less. Its credit is as good as that of the Pennsylvania Railroad or any corporation in existence. It is today better, relatively to its total wealth, than that of any European nation.

The complete execution of the community program of Greater Los Angeles is within easy reach of the people. They only need to awake to their commanding position in the world of capital and to **put their city and county machinery on a basis of efficiency and then seize their opportunity.**

The Fallacious and Insincere Outcry Against Bond Issues is Not in the Interests of the People

This two billion dollar city and county do not owe, for all their great harbor, aqueduct, municipal and school properties, a tithe of the indebtedness of the Pennsylvania Railroad. The county's indebtedness for its wonderful road system is only \$3,300,000. Unlimited capital is available for flood control, conservation and other features of the really modest community program I have outlined; but whenever far-seeing men propose availing themselves of this capital, as the Pennsylvania Railroad would do, there is an outcry of extravagance, excessive bonded indebtedness and high taxation from men who would pronounce such a loan by the Pennsylvania Railroad perfectly good business.

This outcry against bond issues is fallacious. It is insincere. It is not in the public interest. Private, selfish interests are back of it.

A few people do not want the city and county to enter the immensely profitable field of commercial enterprise because they want it all for themselves.

They prefer their private profit and advantage to the public welfare.

Unfortunately, the great frost, the two disastrous floods and the collapse of the Los Angeles Investment Company have disheartened many of the people and made them, just now, susceptible to delusive appeals of this character.

Unfortunately, too, in the conduct of that magnificent enterprise, the Los Angeles aqueduct, the public men of the city were too conservative and timid to champion a bond issue large enough to carry forward the aqueduct, its distributing system and the entire power system at the same time. If they had done so (constitutional and charter provisions permitting), the sale of water and power today would be sufficient to carry the bonds, principal and interest.

The public is justified in demanding that a bond issue be for the benefit of the entire community and not to creat opportunities for a few to profit by; but, if funds are properly administered, the public cannot justify itself in refusing, through fear of incurring indebtedness, to do a thing which ought to be done; for example, to spend \$15,000,000 in permanently controlling floods which have in two years destroyed \$15,000,000 worth of taxable property.

Big, bold, carefully planned measures, like those of Manchester and Duesseldorf, and like those of the Pennsylvania Railroad, are safer and sounder than timid, halting, half-way measures.

The Program as Outlined Has Originated With the People and is Entirely Feasible

It is with the community program outlined in this pamphlet in mind that my course as a member of the board of supervisors is chosen from day to day.

This program is not of my making. Every one of the ten proposals originated in this great, aspiring community and is cherished deep down in the hearts of the people.

If there be any exception, it is the suggestion of a publicly owned and operated merchant marine. But

even that project was mooted by the secretary of the Los Angeles Harbor Commission, as long ago as 1911, in the form of a proposal for a government line of steamships to the Atlantic seaboard.

This part of the program may come later than some of the others, but it will surely come sooner or later. It would come tomorrow if the people rose in their might and willed it.

And what a glory it will be for Greater Los Angeles when her argosies, as proud as those of ancient Venice, plough the seas of both hemispheres, bearing the products of ten thousand factories, employing myriads of busy workmen and creating opportunities for all who desire to lead lives of useful activity.

For to this wonderful city and county, with their more purely American population than is to be found elsewhere, and with, consequently, their clearer vision of American ideals, their stronger hold on American traditions and their truer devotion to distinctive American principles, the world must look for the grandest achievements in city-building and community planning and execution. This people—unquestionably the most intelligent—must demonstrate themselves to be the most efficient community in the United States. Owing their exceptional culture to the toil and self-sacrifice of unnumbered generations in the past, they are under sternest obligations to transmit their inheritance, enriched and ennobled, to generations that are to come.

The opportunity is ours, but not necessarily all ours. We can call into cooperation with us not only our own thriving cities and towns, but the willing forces of the state and nation. With or without their assistance, but better with it, we shall solve the vast and far-reaching problems confronting us.

JOHN J. HAMILTON.



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